Chapter 62 The Hunt ②

ARE THEY OFF ON A RENDEZ-VOUS?
WHSPR ヒソ
SEEMS TO ME HE WENT OFF FOR A PRIVATE MOMENT WITH THAT LADY AT-TENDANT.
WHSPR ヒソ
I WONDER WHERE HE RAN OFF TO.
ヒソ WHSPR

OF COURSE NOT.
イラッ FUME

...BUT NOW I REGRET NOT DISOBEYING ORDERS AND FOLLOWING HIM MYSELF.
I SENT SOME OF MY MEN TO GO LOOK FOR HIM...

BUT IT'S BEEN AN HOUR NOW SINCE HE EXCUSED HIMSELF.
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED.
カツ TAP
TAP カツ

SHISHO IS AS INSCRUTABLE AS EVER, BUT HE'S THE HOST OF THIS BANQUET.
I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD PURPOSEFULLY ORCHESTRATE AN INCIDENT AT HIS OWN PARTY.
DOES THIS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH SHISHO, THEN?
I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS THIS WITH FATHER...
...BUT I CAN'T APPROACH HIM SINCE HE'S HERE AS A GUEST.
FATHER GAVE THAT GIRL SOME KIND OF AN ORDER.
I THOUGHT HE MUST HAVE A PLAN...
...BUT IF HE DOES, NOTHING'S COME OF IT YET.

ALL I CAN DO IS WAIT FOR MY MEN TO REPORT BACK.
I HATE HOW MY ROLE HERE IS MERELY FOR FORM.
IF ONLY I COULD AT LEAST GO SEARCHING MYSELF...
EXCUSE ME, SIR.
KLAK
KLAK
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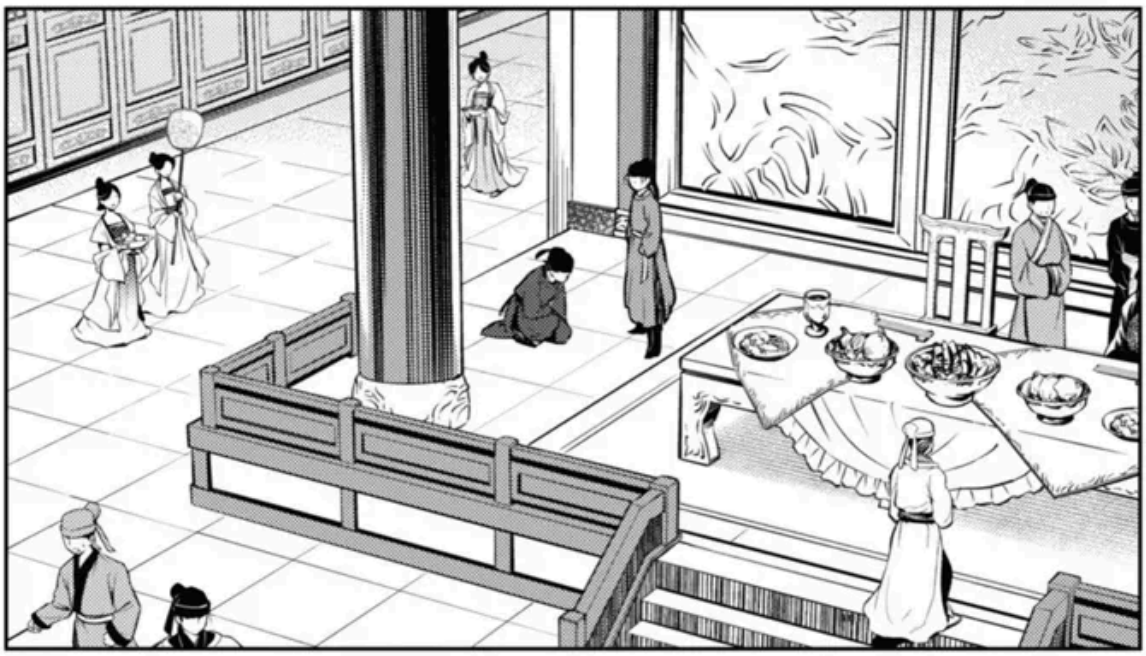
RAISE YOUR HEAD.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
THAT CLOTH ...

A STRIP OF MY MASTER'S ROBES.
HEY! IS THAT—
CLENCH

I FOUND IT CAUGHT ON SOME ROCKS IN THE RIVER.
THERE WAS NO ONE NEARBY.
BEYOND THAT POINT LAY THE RAPIDS, WHICH ARE FIERCER THAN USUAL DUE TO THE RECENT RAINS.

CLAMOR
HOW CAN THIS BE?!
QUICK! SEND OUT A SEARCH PARTY!

STOMP
STOMP
WHAT DO YOU THINK MY MEN HAVE BEEN DOING ALL THIS TIME?
THOSE WHO WERE ACTUALLY WORRIED ABOUT MY LORD'S SAFETY HAVE ALREADY GIVEN ORDERS TO THEIR MEN.



PLEASE EXCUSE ME.
I'M GOING TO RETURN TO THE PLACE WHERE I FOUND THIS TO SEARCH FOR HIM AGAIN.
SHP

IT'S HIM...
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!
THAT SOLDIER FROM EARLIER.
WHAT'S HE SEARCHING FOR?
クン SNIFF
クン SNIFF
I'M SO SORRY.
WOOF!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WOOF!

HMPH. THAT HUNTING DOG NEEDS BETTER TRAINING.

DO SOME-THING ABOUT THAT DOG ALREADY!
WOOF!
WOOF!

WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND?
SIR BA SEN!
WE FOUND THIS...
A BLOOD-STAINED STRIP OF CLOTH.
DID YOU FIND ANYONE IN THE VICINITY?
THE RIVERBANK WASN'T WET, SO I DON'T THINK HE CLIMBED OUT THERE.
THE TEARS ON THIS MATCH UP TO THE CLOTH I RECEIVED EARLIER.
IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S FROM MY LORD'S CLOTHING.

A BROKEN ARROW?
THERE ARE SURE TO BE MANY GUESTS WHO BROUGHT ARROWS MADE WITH THESE BECAUSE THEY'RE SAID TO BRING GOOD LUCK.
THE FLETCHING IS MADE OF EXPENSIVE HAWK FEATHERS.
HOW-EVER...
...WE FOUND THIS WITH THE CLOTH.
WHEN HIRING AN ARTISAN TO CRAFT FOR THEM, THEY'RE OFTEN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE SHAPE OF THE ARROWHEAD AND MATERIALS USED.
IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THAT EACH HAS BROUGHT THEIR OWN UNIQUELY DESIGNED ARROWS FOR HUNTING.
...THOSE BELONGING TO THE UPPER NOBILITY HATE HAVING THE SAME ORNAMENTATION AS SOMEONE ELSE.
BE THAT AS IT MAY...

I HATE TO ASK...
...BUT PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INSPECT THE ITEMS YOU'VE BROUGHT.
WE FOUND THEM.
THIS IS THE SAME KIND OF ARROW AS THE ONE FOUND ON THE RIVER-BANK.
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I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY OF THIS!
THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF MISTAKE!
HIGH MINISTER, MINISTRY OF FINANCE
LOEN
THEN WHY WAS ONE OF YOUR ARROWS FOUND WITH A STRIP OF MY MASTER'S CLOTHING?
...ONE OF THE ARROWS I SHOT WHILE HUNTING HAPPENED TO FLOW DOWN-STREAM?
PER-HAPS ...
IN ANY CASE ...
...YOU CAN'T TREAT ME AS IF I'VE DONE SOMETHING WRONG JUST BECAUSE YOU FOUND ONE ARROW.
LOEN LOOKS GENUINELY SHOCKED BY THIS ACCUSA-TION.
AS DO HIS MEN.

BESIDES, IF HE WERE THE CULPRIT, IT WOULD BE CARE-LESS...
...TO KEEP THE SAME KIND OF ARROWS ON HAND AS THOSE THAT WE DISCOV-ERED.
THEN ...
...WE MUST SEARCH THE AREA TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY OTHER ARROWS OR ANYTHING ELSE WE MISSED.
TWITCH!
ピクッ
SEARCH THE FOREST AS WELL, NOT JUST THE RIVERBANK.

DID I GET THEM?
...AND FOR THE REST TO GO SEARCH IN THE FOREST FOR FALLEN ARROWS.
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK HALF OF YOU TO CONTINUE SEARCHING FOR MY MASTER...
NO ONE PROTESTED THE IDEA.

I HOPE THEY BOUGHT IT.
SIGH
THIS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, ISN'T IT?
Listen to what this man has to say.